DECORATIVE COVERINGS AND PRODUCTION METHODS THEREFORE

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to coverings which are adapted to be placed on a surface. In particular, the present invention relates to methodologies for producing decorative panels which may be directly used as surface coverings or which may be used to create a pattern that may be reproduced in another media to then be used as a covering for a surface. Accordingly, the technological field of the present invention relates to decorative coverings such as, for example, in wallpaper, linoleum, vinyl coverings, plastic coverings, tiles and the like.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The use of various coverings for surfaces in the human habitat have long been used both for protective and decorative purposes. For example, walls and ceilings have been traditionally protected and decorated by plaster, paint, tapestries, paneling, wallpaper, metal sheeting and tile, to name a few. On the other hand, floors have typically been covered by ceramic tiles, vinyl and plastic tiles and sheets, linoleum, carpet, parquet and wood slats, again, to name a few. Work stations, such as countertops, and even articles of furniture, such as tables, have been covered by ceramic or stone materials, metal sheets, thermoformed plastic sheets, paneling, veneer and the like.

As a result of the desirability of various finishes for such surfaces, there is a constant demand for new decorative coverings. Interior designers and others involved in selecting surface coverings typically seek out "new looks" to incorporate in the overall aesthetic presentation of living and work spaces. The present invention is directed to the production of unique decorative coverings which, according to the methodologies of the present invention may be constructed as "one of a kind" coverings or which may be fabricated as a master pattern reproducible in a variety of surface covering media.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide new and useful methodologies for producing decorative coverings which provide a pleasing aesthetic appearance when applied to a surface to be covered.

Another object of the present invention is to provide products in the form of decorative coverings, which in part a rich, aesthetic look to a surface so covered.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide methodologies for the production of surface coverings, and coverings produced according to such methodologies, which provide an illusion of depth thereby giving a three dimensional appearance to a surface.

Still a further object of the present invention is to provide decorative coverings and methodologies for the production thereof which produces unique patterns which may then be reproduced by mass production techniques yet which patterns are relatively inexpensive to create.

According to the present invention, then, a general method is described for producing a decorative panel that is adapted to be supported on a surface. This broad method includes a first step of providing a flat piece of creaseable material which has a memory for creases placed therein. Next, the flat piece of material is crushed into a ball-like mass in order to crease the flat piece along a multitude of creased lines. The ball-like mass is then unballed to form a relatively flat production blank that has a front surface and a back surface. This production blank thus has topography which includes peak portions and valley portions formed by regions of production blank lying between various ones of the creased lines. A sprayable pigment is then sprayed onto at least one of the front and back surfaces of the production blank in an oblique direction so that the sprayable pigment impinges and is retained on the peak portions with the valley portions and lee sides of the peak portions being shielded from the sprayable pigment.

In the preferred method, the flat piece of creaseable material may be colored. Alternately, or in combination with using a colored piece of creaseable material, the ball-like mass formed from the piece of material may be immersed into a clear or tinted dip to form a film on the surface thereof in order to alter the appearance before it is unballed into the production blank. Where dipped, the production blank is dried before being sprayed with the sprayable pigment.

When the production blank is sprayed with a sprayable pigment, the oblique angle of incidence is preferably 45° or less to the plane of the production blank, and it is preferable that this angle of incidence be on the order of 10°–30°. Further, if desired, a plurality of sprayable pigments may be sprayed onto the selected front or back surface of the production blank. In which case, each sprayable pigment is sprayed in an oblique direction, and these oblique directions may preferably be different from one another. After forming a decorative panel, as described above, it may be adhered onto a selected support surface, for example, by interfacing the surface opposite the pigmented surface with an adhesive material and by flattening the decorative panel into a substantially planar configuration.

A plurality of decorative panels may be prepared by the above described method, and these decorative panels may be of uniform or different geometric shapes. According to the present invention, the plurality of decorative panels may be arranged with an organization on the support surface wherein at least some of the decorative panels have contiguous edges and, if desired, some of the decorative panels may overlay one another to enhance the three dimensional appearance. After adhering the decorative panel to the support surface, it may be coated with a sealing and/or glazing compound. Further, the decorative panel adhered to the support surface may form a production pattern and the additional step of reproducing the production pattern onto a decorative medium is described. Here, the decorative medium is selected from a group consisting of: wallpaper, vinyl covering material, fabric covering material, tile, plastic covering material and linoleum.

As an alternative to spraying the ball-like mass with a sprayable pigment, it is possible to utilize the film derived from dipping the ball-like mass to create the three dimensional effect. Here, the dip is preferably tinted and, after being dried, is flattened and adhered to the support surface. Again, a plurality of panels may be prepared and organized either with contiguous edges or with overlaying portions. A sealing and/or glazing compound may again be used, and the resulting panel or panels may be used as a production pattern.